

Congressman Urges Citizens to Make their Opinions Known Before Upcoming Public Comment Deadlines

Washington, DC -- Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today wrote to the United States Postal Service (USPS) to reiterate and emphasize his opposition to the proposed closings of eight rural post offices in Ulster and Sullivan counties. With the public comment periods set to end starting on November 23, Hinchey is urging citizens to make known their own opinions known on the proposed closures by writing to the USPS Westchester District, which is compiling public comments on the issue..

"Closing rural post offices in Ulster and Sullivan counties would do very little to address the financial problems facing the United States Postal Service, but it would create significant hardships for people and businesses in those areas," said Hinchey. "While a large number of residents have already written to the Postal Service in opposition to the proposed closings, I want to make sure that all residents and businesses in the affected communities are aware of these proposed closings and have the chance to communicate their opinions. The best thing people can do to weigh in on this issue is to write to the USPS district office to make known their opinions and concerns."

Citizens interested in commenting on the proposed closure of rural post offices in Sullivan and Ulster counties can write to Ms. Leslie Johnson, Manager, Consumer Industry Contact, United States Post Service, 1000 Westchester Ave, White Plains, NY 10610-9608.

The comment periods on post office closures studies are different for each post office:

- Chichester, Post Office #12415, public comment period closes 11/24/2011
- Fremont Center, Post Office #12736, public comment period closes 12/13/2011
- Highland Lake, Post Office #12743, public comment period closes 11/23/2011
- Kenoza Lake, Post Office #12750, public comment period closes, 12/15/2011
- North Branch, Post Office #12766, public comment period closes 12/15/2011

- Obernburg, Post Office #12767, public comment period closes 12/13/2011
- Spring Glen, Post Office #12783, public comment period closes 11/23/2011
- Pond Eddy, Post Office #12770, public comment period closes 12/21/2011

In August, Hinchey wrote Postmaster General Patrick R. Donahoe urging against the closure of rural post offices. Hinchey has also been fighting to prevent the closing of the Mid Hudson General Mail Facility (GMF) in Newburgh, New York, which employs 380 workers.

The full text of Hinchey's letter to USPS District Manager Joseph Lubrano follows:

November 15, 2011

Joseph Lubrano, District Manager
USPS Westchester District
1000 Westchester Avenue
White Plains, NY 10610-9608

Dear Mr. Lubrano:

I am writing to follow-up my August 2011 letter to the Postmaster General regarding the Post Office Discontinuance Studies that are currently being conducted for retail offices in Sullivan and Ulster Counties. As I conveyed in that correspondence, I have been, and remain, adamantly opposed to the closings of the Post Offices in rural communities in my District. While I am working in Washington to assist the USPS with needed reforms, including revamping the retirement contribution requirements, I believe that the proposed closures of small community Post Offices does very little to improve the agency's financial position. These closings do, however, threaten to undermine the high quality of USPS services as well as erode needed public support for proposed reforms in the Postal Service that are pending in Congress.

As you know, the USPS announced in late July that it was studying the closure of 3,700 post offices across the nation. Included in this list were the facilities in Fremont Center, Highland Lake, Kenoza Lake, North Branch, Obernburg, and Pond Eddy in Sullivan County as well as

Chichester and Spring Glen in Ulster County. Over the past months, I have heard from hundreds of constituents throughout these small communities, as I know you have. Residents in the impacted communities are universally and vehemently opposed to the closings of these rural post offices, and they have raised a wide range of concerns and compelling reasons why these facilities remain vitally important to their businesses, families, and communities.

I urge you to consider all of the public comments and carefully weigh the impacts on these communities as well as unintended consequences of these closings. The potential savings from closing these sites is relatively minimal, and the lost revenue and increased expenses associated with these possible closings must also be factored into the agency's decision. For instance, the Postal Service cannot assume that all residents who now have Post Office boxes or who use other services such as USPS money orders will be willing and able to travel to other communities if their local sites close, which would result in loss of revenue for USPS. Additionally, the Postal Service must also assess and consider the increased costs of rural delivery to areas that now rely on Post Office boxes and do not have home delivery. As you know, many of these communities have no public transportation options and limited or no Internet service. Local residents, including many senior citizens and low-income individuals, continue to rely on "brick and mortar" locations in their communities, as do many local businesses. All of this must be taken into account in the Postal Service's decision-making.

As I have conveyed to you on a number of occasions, I highly value the United States Postal Service, and I will continue to fight to ensure that unreasonable financial requirements instituted some years ago do not undermine the viability of one of the greatest postal services in the world. However, I cannot accept the dismantling of the rural network of Post Offices in Sullivan and Ulster County, which in the long-run will save very little resources and undermine the level of service that has distinguished the USPS for many generations. I strongly urge you to keep these Post Offices open.

I appreciate your consideration of the public comments from my constituents as well as this letter. I look forward to working with you to strengthen the USPS, and I offer my appreciation in advance for your diligent efforts to ensure that our rural communities continue to have full access to the Postal Service's critical services.

Sincerely,

Maurice D. Hinchey